

PASEO PATHWAY

HEART, SOUL, MIND, STRENGTH

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

29 “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ **31** The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

MARK 12:28-31

PASEOPATHWAY

Simply put, if Jesus says loving him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving our neighbor as ourselves are the two most important things to God, then those are the things we need to focus on. The Paseo Pathway, our method of discipleship, has two major focuses, growing in our love of God in every aspect of our life and loving our neighbors in genuine, selfless, relational ways. The Pathway, like everything God does, is not meant to be walked alone; it's meant to be shared and experienced with a group of friends.

The word for disciple in the New Testament comes from the Greek word, *mathetes*, which means, "one who engages in learning through instruction from another." In other words, a disciple is a student. However, we need to be clear about the differences between the Biblical world's understanding of a student and ours. Disciples of teachers were common in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Philosophers and religious teachers would gain disciples, but the disciples didn't seek to just learn from the teacher's lectures. This wasn't a classroom teacher-to-student style learning from today. Instead, the disciples would follow the teacher throughout their everyday life. They sought to learn not just their teachings, but their character and lifestyle as well. In other words, disciples followed teachers in order to become like their teachers.

This puts a new twist on our understanding of what being a disciple of Christ means. We aren't just believers and we are not just invited to come and learn from his teachings. We are invited to come and know him, live everyday life with him, and in so doing become like him. But unlike earthly teachers, when you grow to know and have a relationship with Jesus to this level, you will find that not only will your knowledge of him grow, but your love for him will grow as well. In fact, this is God's ultimate aim in our discipleship! To see him, learn about him, grow to know him, and fall in love with him more and more.

Therefore, the Paseo Pathway is far more like developing a relationship than it is like a class or process. At least, that is our hope for all of us involved. But in order for it to maintain that focus, you must commit to not treat scripture reading like homework and group times like classrooms. Instead, every bit of scripture reading is an opportunity to meet with God and grow in your love for him. Every time you gather with friends or serve is an opportunity to love others as yourself.

“Therefore, the Paseo Pathway is far more like developing a relationship than it is like a class or process.”

Everything about the Pathway hinges on you making a commitment to what we call REALationships. Yes I know that is misspelled. We spelled it that way to make a point. Be REAL and Be Relational. Be this with God and be this with others. Bring your whole, messy, un-put-together, unperfected self and be honest about who you are and what you are struggling with. And in the Grace of Jesus you will experience life and growth.

Each week on the pathway you will be asked to meet with God on your own through Scripture reading and journaling. This may be a completely new practice for you, so be patient. Picture it like a daily time to sit down and chat with God. He will speak to you through scripture and His Spirit, and you will speak to him through your prayers and response. At the end of each week you'll gather with your friends and have meaningful conversations about what your time in scripture and what God has impressed upon you. Your group's leader will have questions to help guide these conversations, but this is not meant to be used like a teacher and a classroom. Remember, this is all about relationships. So if you don't like the questions, ditch them. The main point is to focus on what God is saying through scripture and how he wants to use that to affect change in your life. In particular, *how can what you've been reading deepen your love for God and others?*

YOURHEART

This month we will be focusing on loving God with all of our heart. But what does that even mean? Well let's be clear about something. The Biblical understanding of a person is not chopped up into neat little compartments like heart, soul, mind, and strength. The true thrust of what Jesus was saying was to love God with all of who we are, every aspect of our being. However, it can be helpful to use this list to truly analyze our relationship with God. And in so doing, by dividing our Pathway's focus into these four areas *heart, soul, mind, and strength* we hope to encompass the complete nature of who we are in relation to God.

“God doesn't see us in segments, and he certainly will not be confined to one arena of our life.”

We tend to segment our life into tidy arenas. We have our religious life and thoughts, our political life and thoughts, our work life and thoughts, and family life and thoughts, our recreational life and thoughts. But God doesn't see us in segments, and he certainly will not be confined to one arena of our life. He is Lord of all and is to be loved by all that we are. So please know by seeking to grow in our love for the Lord in this way we are not seeking to divide ourselves up, but just the opposite, to bring ourselves together into one deep love for God that affects every aspect of ourselves.

So with that being said, we will use the word heart to mean our **affections, passions, and focuses**.

AFFECTIONS - God created all of us with affections and emotions. Whether we realize it or not, these emotions steer our lives in powerful ways. We all long for Joy and Peace and Love. We all get frustrated when we feel the opposites, Sadness and Chaos and Loneliness. We often sit back and wait for other things or other people in our life to stir our affections. But what happens when we direct our affections towards God? What if we allow his love for us to stir our affections for him? What if he becomes our emotional center? Often our faith become stoic and robotic. Our church experience can be dull and boring. And the heart of the problem is that we have not allowed our faith to penetrate our affections. Use this month to do as the Psalmist says, "Take **delight** in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your **heart**." (Psalm 37:4)

PASSIONS - What are you passionate about? That is a deep and loaded question. Some struggle in life because they seemingly have lost their passion, lost their dreams. Others struggle because their passions are misplaced and they long for things that aren't eternal and in the grand scheme of things don't matter. Years ago, I heard a preacher friend of mine preach a sermon called "Dreaming in League with God," and I have never forgotten the title and premise. What if God's dreams became your dreams, and God's passions became your passions? The famous missionary Jim Elliot once said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep for what he cannot lose." Want a joy filled life? Learn to find joy in what the creator of the universe and the creator of joy finds joy in. Learning to love God with your heart will require you to examine your passions and ask if they are in alignment with God's own heart.

FOCUSES - Where and how do you spend most of your mental energy and focus? Our time expenditure is one of the greatest indicators of what we have become to treasure in life. And Jesus warns, "For where your **treasure** is, there your **heart** will be also." (Matthew 6:21). Throughout time, man has regularly and foolishly made worthless things on earth our treasure. Modern times are no different. We will spend ourselves and our focus on sports and television shows and hobbies and technology all while neglecting those things that are of eternal value. It's not that these things are inherently wrong, but that they make poor treasures. When they consume us to the point that they rob our heart from God and others, then we need to check ourselves. To love God with your heart will cause you to take inventory of your focuses and lay them before God.

FIRST JOHN

To help us engage our heart - our affections, passions, and focuses - we will spend time with God each week through reading and interacting with 1 John. To get a better understanding of the background, historical context, and main focus of 1 John take a few minutes to watch the Bible Project video at <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/1-3-john/> . We will provide you a weekly Bible Reading Plan as a suggested method of reading 1 John, but ultimately, choose the pace and method of reading that works best for you to maintain a relational focus. Remember, **THIS IS NOT HOMEWORK!** It is an opportunity to meet with God. Because of that, before you read, take time to pray and ask God to speak to you and help you understand his word.

I would suggest always reading scripture with a pen and a journal. Write down your questions and your thoughts. Write down what God is highlighting to you from his word. If you've never journaled or taken notes while studying scripture this may seem kind of odd. But ultimately, it allows you to interact with the word of God in ways that can help you remember and recall what he is teaching you.

A few things to remember. First, the Bible is not about you, it's about God. It ultimately is our way of understanding him better. Second, everything in the Bible has context. Understand what is going on in the context of the book and the time. And in light of those two things, seek to understand what the section of scripture teaches us about the eternal God.

I suggest answering five simple questions every time you read:

1. **What does this teach me about God?**
2. **What does this teach me about the world?**
3. **What does this teach me about my need for God?**
4. **How does this enable me to love God more (with my affections, passions, and focuses)?**
5. **How does this enable me to love my neighbor more?**

Since 1 John is only five chapters long, you will read through the book multiple times over this portion of the Pathway. That is fine; in fact, it is more than fine, it is extremely helpful. Look for themes. Seek to notice things in the text that you didn't notice the first time you read it. Ask God to show you something new each day.

And finally, spend time pondering what God is teaching you each day. Meditate on it. Pray about it. Take notes of it. And come prepared to chat with your friends about it. This can be a season of meaningful growth for all of you. Be blessed, and enjoy your time on the Pathway!

GROWTHGROUPS

The Pathway is designed to work best in conjunction with a Growth Group. Like you, each person in the group is seeking to grow in their love for God and others. They will also be using the Reading Plan and Journal practices to meet with God regularly. The group will meet weekly to discuss all that God has been teaching them and revealing to them through scripture, and to get REAL with one another about what is happening in their lives. We invite you to join in to this way of life on the Pathway.

This Group will meet weekly for an eight week session. Throughout the session the groups will have three main rhythms:

BIBLESTUDY - During Bible Study times the group will review the passages of scripture that they read over the previous week(s). They will seek to answer questions about the text and about what the text reveals about God and his nature. Again this is not meant to be a time to go over “homework” but a time to share about what everyone is experiencing in their relationship with God through scripture.

FAMILYTIME - Adults aren’t the only ones walking the Pathway together, our Paseo Kids are as well. Twice in the eight week session, older kids will be invited to join their parents in the Bible Study time. It is an opportunity for generations to connect and learn from each other as kids get to hear their parents share about their relationship with God and as they share with their parents and others about their own relationship. It is important to model for the kids that this is all about loving God and others more deeply and genuinely. Two other times in the eight week session multiple growth groups will gather on a Sunday night for a fun night to connect with each other. Again, these will be multi-generational gatherings as young and old all in between connect with one another.

DISCIPLESHIPGROUP - And finally, twice during the eight week session, men and women will split up for some REAL-talk time. These nights are meant to allow each person to open up their life and be honest with each other. It provides opportunities for support, accountability, and friendships to genuinely develop.

The goal of each of these eight week sessions is to provide as many opportunities as possible for people to grow in connection and relationship with other believers as they grow in their love for God. To maximize these opportunities to their fullest, we ask each participant to fully commit to the Growth Group rhythms for the entire eight week session. We understand that life can some time get extremely busy and might require a person to miss a few meetings. But, if possible, we challenge everyone to make the Growth Group a priority in their scheduling. Each eight week session will be followed by a multi-week break.

Our suggested schedule for the eight week session would be:

	SUNDAY	GROWTH GROUP DAY
WEEK 1		BS/FT
WEEK 2		BS
WEEK 3		BS
WEEK 4	FT	DG
WEEK 5		BS/FT
WEEK6		BS
WEEK 7		BS
WEEK 8	FT	DG

READING PLAN

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
WK 1	1 JOHN 1	1 JOHN 2	1 JOHN 3	1 JOHN 4	1 JOHN 5
WK2	1 JOHN 1:1-4	PROVERBS 15:30-31	1 JOHN 1:5-10	MATTHEW 5:14-16	JOHN 3:19-21
WK3	1 JOHN 2:1-6	JOHN 14:15-21	1 JOHN 2:7-11	JOHN 13:1-17, 34-35	1 JOHN 2:12-14
WK4	1 JOHN 2:15-17	MATTHEW 6:19-24	1 JOHN 2:18-27	MATTHEW 7:15-20	1 JOHN 2:28-3:3
WK5	1 JOHN 3:4-10	1 JOHN 3:11-15	1 JOHN 3:16-18	MATTHEW 25:31-46	1 JOHN 3:19-24
WK6	1 JOHN 4:1-6	1 JOHN 4:7-12	ROMANS 5:5-8	1 JOHN 4:13-18	1 JOHN 4:19-21
WK7	1 JOHN 5:1-5	JOHN 16:16-33	1 JOHN 5:6-12	JOHN 3:13-18	1 JOHN 5:13-21
WK8	1 JOHN 1	1 JOHN 2	1 JOHN 3	1 JOHN 4	1 JOHN 5

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. What does this teach me about God?
2. What does this teach me about the world?
3. What does this teach me about my need for God?
4. How does this enable me to love God more (with my affections, passions, and focuses)?
5. How does this enable me to love my neighbor more?

GROUP QUESTIONS

Here are some suggested questions for discussion each week. They are based on that week's readings and should help spark deeper reflection on what God is teaching us through 1 John. Feel free to use these questions and to develop your own. As you read, write down any discussion questions that you'd like to ask the entire group. In answering these questions, seek to be REAL and not just surface level. True discipleship happens in REALationships!

Week 1 -

1. Have you ever read 1 John before? What sections did you find surprising or meaningful?
2. What themes did you see throughout the book? (Ask the kids to answer this one. A good activity to do with them is to light a candle and turn off the lights. Have a conversation about the theme of light and darkness.)
3. Share with the group some of the things that God impressed upon you in your journal.
4. How did making time to read and journal each day this week cause you to reorient your focus and time? (Ask the kids if they found it hard to journal each day. You can encourage them to draw in their journals. Draw a picture of light and dark, love, etc.)

Week 2 -

1. What do John and the apostles find Joy in doing according to 1:4? Have any of you experienced the joy of telling others about Jesus or seeing others come to believe in Jesus?
2. What do you think it means to "walk in the Light?"
3. What emotions are associated with light and darkness? What emotions do people have about coming into the light according to the John 3 passage? Have you ever experienced this?
4. What did God personally teach you about your life this week?

Week 3 -

1. What is the connection between loving God and obeying Jesus? Have you ever thought of obedience as love before?
2. What stands out to you in the story of Jesus washing his disciples feet? Did you serve anyone in a selfless way this week? What do you find difficult about serving others?

3. What do you think it means to “walk in the same way in which [Jesus] walked?”
4. What needs to change within your heart (affections, passions, focuses) in order to love God with your obedience through loving others?

Week 4 - (DISCIPLESHIPGROUP)

1. Did I invest the proper quality/quantity of time in my most important relationships?
2. Did my life reflect verbal integrity?
3. Did I express a forgiving attitude toward others?
4. Did I practice undisciplined or addictive behavior?
5. Was I honorable in my financial dealings?
6. Was I sexually pure?
7. Did I spend time with the Lord this week, completing the Bible reading for the week?
8. Did I pray for my pre-Christian friends? Did I talk with someone about Christ?

Week 5 -

1. Why should we love others?
2. In what ways should we love others?
3. Who should we love?
4. What hate or anger or prejudice do you need to confess in order to more fully love as Jesus loves?

Week 6 -

1. Why do you think John is so adamant that we be careful about allowing “false prophets” to influence us?
2. In what ways have you experienced God “pouring his love” into your heart through his Spirit?
3. What is significant about the order that God first loved us? How should this enable us to more fully love him?
4. What fears do you need to confess and allow God’s perfect love to drive out?

Week 7 -

1. What do you think it means that Jesus has “overcome the world?” How does this bring us peace?
2. Why do you think that some find it difficult to believe Jesus is the Son of God? How could our lives help others come to faith?
3. How has studying 1 John affected your faith in Jesus?
4. How have you grown in loving God with your heart (affections, passions, focuses)?

Week 8 - (DISCIPLESHIPGROUP)

1. Did I invest the proper quality/quantity of time in my most important relationships?
2. Did my life reflect verbal integrity?
3. Did I express a forgiving attitude toward others?
4. Did I practice undisciplined or addictive behavior?
5. Was I honorable in my financial dealings?
6. Was I sexually pure?
7. Did I spend time with the Lord this week, completing the Bible reading for the week?
8. Did I pray for my pre-Christian friends? Did I talk with someone about Christ?